

WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN PUBLIC-HOUSES (IRELAND).

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INFORMATION

OBTAINED FROM THE POLICE AS TO

THE FREQUENTING OF PUBLIC-HOUSES BY WOMEN  
AND CHILDREN

IN THE SIX COUNTY BOROUGHES IN IRELAND.

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

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# INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM THE POLICE

AS TO THE

## FREQUENTING OF PUBLIC-HOUSES BY WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE SIX COUNTY BOROUGHES IN IRELAND.

In 1907 the Home Office published the results of the enquiries which they addressed to the police forces of the Metropolis and of certain large towns in England as to the frequenting of public-houses by women and children (Cd. 3813). Similar statistics for Ireland are now furnished, based upon the observation of a number of selected public-houses in Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Londonderry, and Waterford during the fortnight 13th-26th June, 1908.

The public-houses chosen for observation were distributed over the various parts of the cities, and the observations were made from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m., except on Saturdays and Sundays.

In Ireland, public-houses in the larger towns are closed at 10 p.m. on Saturdays and all day on Sundays except in the Dublin Police District, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford, where they are open from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays the observations were taken during the period in which the public-houses are permitted to be open.

The results of the observations are shown in the following tabular form:—

Name of City.	No. of houses observed.	Period of observation.	No. of Women and Children entering public-houses.					No. of Children brought to door.
			Women.	Children.			Total No. of Children.	
				In arms.	Under 7.	Between 7 and 15.		
		Days.						
Belfast, ... ..	23	14	3,963	2,630	1,687	2,152	6,419	122
Cork, ... ..	10	"	1,935	1,374	739	390	2,503	74
Dublin, ... ..	22	"	16,074	5,897	8,767	13,425	27,993	328
Limerick, ... ..	6	"	6,193	650	1,891	2,033	4,583	78
Londonderry, ...	8	12	856	489	444	42	975	7
Waterford, ... ..	6	14	5,441	696	651	1,359	2,705	33

Notes.—(1) Public-houses in Londonderry are closed by law during the whole of holidays.

(2) Special reports from the police authorities as to the disparity between the figures returned for the Cities of Belfast and Dublin will be found at the end of this return.

Extracts from the reports of the officers who submitted these Statistics are subjoined.

### Belfast.

The practice of bringing children into licensed premises prevails to a considerable extent. It will be observed that during the period 5,963 women entered public-houses, taking with them therewith 6,449 children and to the doors thereof 122 children. The figures are undoubtedly high in spite of trade depression, which is severely felt in the city. I find that the greatest number of cases occurred in the lowest class districts. Many of the children brought were of such an age that they could not be left at home

by themselves. It would appear to be a fairly common practice, too, for children between 7 and 14 years to enter public-houses alone for intoxicating liquor and carry it home to their parents. The practice (whether children enter alone or in company with their mothers) is undoubtedly bad, and must necessarily have a demoralizing effect. Children are largely creatures of imitation, and what they see their elders do they in turn love to do; what they see in public-houses is anything but good for their young minds.

Legislation is sorely needed to deal with this evil, which brings misery and ruin to the houses principally of the working class, but to be effective it should to a great extent restrict the grant of spirit grocers' licences. This city abounds with spirit grocers which form a training ground for the formation of habits which lead to misery and poverty. The spirit grocers have developed a profitable business in illegal sales, which are hard to detect and still harder to prove to the satisfaction of the local Magistrates.

#### *Cork.*

The returns as to the number of women and children frequenting the 10 public-houses chosen for observation reveal a lamentable state of things, and it is believed that in a number, though not in the great majority of other public-houses in Cork, the same condition of things is to be found to some extent.

The results to the children must be deplorable in the evil example of drinking, encouragement to learn the vice, disreputable language and conduct.

Legislation in this direction would be an incalculable benefit.

#### *Dublin.*

From the 13th to the 26th June, 1908, both days inclusive, 22 public-houses were kept under observation in the Dublin Metropolitan Police District, from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily, except on Saturdays, when the houses close one hour earlier, and on Sundays, when the hours for remaining open are from 2 to 5 p.m.

The houses were taken as follows:—4 each in the A, B, C, D, and F Divisions, and 2 in E Division. One of the houses in each of the Divisions, except E Division, sells liquor only; the remainder sell groceries in addition to intoxicating liquor.

46,574 women entered these houses during the fourteen days, 11,827 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., 21,620 between 2 and 8 p.m., and 13,127 between 8 and 11 p.m.

27,999 children entered the same houses in the fourteen days, and 328 children were brought to the doors but were not brought in. Of the 27,999 who entered, 5,807 were in arms, 8,767 were under 7 years of age but were not carried in arms, and 13,425 were between 7 and 16 years of age.

8,322 children entered between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., 13,873 between 2 and 8 p.m., and 7,604 between 8 and 11 p.m. All the children in arms were brought in except four, who were handed to friends at the doors.

This practice of women and children entering public-houses appears to be very general in the poorer districts, amongst the class who usually frequent public-houses. The practice of carrying children into them is more prevalent in the D Division than in the other districts, but this is accounted for by the markets for Fish, Fruit, and Vegetables being in D Division, and a large number of women are engaged in street trading in the vicinity of those markets.

Although there are no available statistics to support the assertion, yet we are of opinion from observation that the practice of women of the poorer class frequenting public-houses, accompanied by children of tender years, has increased in recent years; and we have no doubt whatever that such a practice must have a demoralising effect on those women, and must also very injuriously affect the future of the children. We therefore think that it can reasonably be held that the practice is prejudicial to the public interest, and, in the case of the children, aids in laying the foundation for idle and criminal careers.

We believe that the number of children frequenting public-houses would be greater but for the Bye-Laws under the Employment of Children Act, 1903, which prohibit Licensed street traders from entering premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor for the purpose of trading.

We hope that the new Children Act, 1908, and the power given under the Summary Jurisdiction (Ireland) Act, 1908, to arrest persons drunk on licensed and other premises in charge of a child apparently under 7 years of age, will aid in checking the evil referred to.

*Limerick.*

Drunkenness amongst women is very prevalent in this city. They usually get half drunk in public-houses under the pretence of purchasing groceries, then go home and send boys or girls to the public-houses for more liquor to complete the debauch. The effect of this example upon children is most demoralising, and the best efforts of Temperance Societies and of the clergy can be of no use so long as youngsters are allowed to frequent public-houses and witness the semi-drunken brawls and listen to the filthy language that usually takes place amongst the lower orders.

I recommend that boys under 16 and girls under 18 should not be permitted to enter public-houses on any pretence whatsoever.

If groceries are sold it should be in a place structurally separated from the place where intoxicating liquor is sold.

*Londonderry.*

The public-houses selected for observation as to the number of women and children frequenting them are situate in poor and thickly-populated portions of the city. A small proportion of the women and children who frequent these houses are of the vagrant and homeless class.

Some evil certainly results from the practice of taking children into public-houses. They become habituated at an early age to the surroundings common to low public-houses, and are soon familiarized with the scenes that frequently occur there; while in some cases I have no doubt but that the habit of drinking is thus acquired at a comparatively early age.

*Waterford.*

In submitting the returns as to women and children frequenting public-houses I beg to report that the practice of women with children visiting public-houses and drinking therein is principally confined to the very poorest class of women and to public-houses where women are the licensed persons and conduct the business. In such houses there is a "smug" set apart for them, which place is often full of half-drunken women with children, and when they remain there too long the other children come looking for them, perhaps for food; they get drink and contract a taste both for it and bad language and other misconduct. It is amongst women whose homes and daily lives are squalid and filthy that this custom prevails. Many of the women, of course, bring children in arms with them, as they have no one to leave in charge of them. In many cases where children are sent, not brought, to public-houses, it is for groceries or similar things, but their habitually frequenting public-houses, even for legitimate objects, has a baneful effect on their morals.

OBSERVATIONS of the POLICE AUTHORITIES at DUBLIN and BELFAST as to the disparity between the numbers of women and children frequenting public-houses returned for these cities whose populations are 290,638 and 349,180 respectively.

*Dublin.*

One of the principal causes of the difference between the figures for Dublin and Belfast is that in the latter city only one house of the number observed is returned as doing grocery business, while in Dublin of the 22 houses observed, 17 do grocery business combined with drink, and are consequently more frequented by women.

This, however, by no means entirely accounts for the difference, since the figures for the single Belfast house doing grocery business do not at all come up to the figures for a house of that class in Dublin, while also the figures for a Dublin house doing drink business only far exceed those for a Belfast house of the same sort, except in one or two cases.

Much, of course, depends on the localities in which the houses observed are situated, and those in Dublin were in thickly-populated centres, chiefly inhabited by dwellers in tenement houses.

I think it possible that in Belfast there are greater facilities for obtaining groceries in unlicensed houses than in Dublin, where in the poorer parts there are few shops in which groceries can be obtained that are not licensed.

It may be also that in Belfast the proportion of public-houses selling drink only to those selling groceries also is greater than in Dublin, where for one public-house dealing in drink only there are six dealing in groceries as well.

The habits of the people may also differ, and there may not be so much porter drinking amongst women in Belfast as in Dublin.

If also the houses observed in Belfast had full publicans' licenses attached thereto as was the case in Dublin, it might be that women in Belfast frequent spirit grocers' premises to a greater extent, and while I have no statistics on the subject, I have always understood that in Belfast there are a very large number of spirit grocers.

In Dublin we have 282 spirit grocers and beer dealers, 15 spirit grocers only, 54 beer dealers only, a total of 351 "off licences."

#### *Belfast.*

In Belfast there are practically no public-houses where groceries are sold. The houses are purely for the sale of drink. The public-houses selected here for observation were, in nearly all cases, in thickly-populated centres, but here we have none of the tenement houses so numerous in Dublin. There are, too, an enormous number of spirit grocers in Belfast, and the women order drink there, paying for it as groceries, and in this way most of the drink taken by women is obtained. Owing to the very large number of these houses the number of women frequenting them would not be large at any single house. From a sense of pride women here won't go into public-houses if they can manage to get drink as conveniently from a spirit grocer. From what I can ascertain I don't think there is anything like as much porter drinking amongst women here as in Dublin.

There are about 500 spirit grocers and beer retailers in Belfast.